HOUSEKEEPING PROBLEMS

312 271 It[1] was beautiful, soft, pure water which gave delightful baths, but heavily silt-laden and supposed not to be fit to drink. We were luckily able to get half a dozen big petrol drums from Gilgit (left behind empty by the R.A.F.), and we stored it in these and let the silt settle. This water served us for washing and for photography.

312 About two miles away there was a spring of clear but hard water that issues from the foot of a cliff down near river level. This was recommended for drinking. So we took on a special man, Sagi by name, as water-carrier and general washer-up, to help in pantry and kitchen. He was a nephew of our old friend Nazar and a good fellow, though for some reason a little less cheery in appearance than our other men. Twice a day he would walk the two miles, climb down and up the 500 or more feet, and bring water for our tea, etc., and for making up the photographic solutions. We paid him the princely sum of about a pound a month, and he was delighted, while his brothers divided amongst them the extra work at home.

Considering the labour involved, it made us feel rather pigs to drink tea half a dozen times a day and expect a daily bath. When two of us were photographing hard and perpetually wanting to wash negatives and prints in eight or ten changes of water, my heart rather bled for Sagi. One day that had been particularly severe I said as he appeared with more and more water buckets at the door of the dark-room: "Poor man, I'm afraid our photographs give you a lot of extra work and trouble." His usually quiet face lit up with a peculiarly charming smile: "Nay, Mother dear, it is a pleasure, not a trouble. The work and trouble are yours."

262 235 [624] The next thing in importance was food, and we found that we could, without apparent hardship to the people, buy a daily hen. There are a couple of officials whose job it is to see about supplies for travellers, and they arranged to get the fowls now from one village and now from another, so that our demands might not press too heavily on anyone. The Hunza hen is an athletic bird. You may see her fly like a lumbering, over-weighted pigeon 15 or 20 feet across a gully, and so we were not surprised to find her wing muscles well-developed.

[1] [The water in the Dála, the aqueduct--Analyst]

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Still she provided us with hen-water soup, and we varied our 262
diet by having the wings for lunch and the legs for dinner, or 235 ●
vice versa. When the cold weather came and the flocks had returned from the mountain grazing grounds, we were sometimes able to vary her with mutton—athletic mutton.

Shafi, the camp cook, had one major fault—he could not 000
cook for nuts. A minor one was that when anything went wrong he lost his head completely (as in the crossing of the Devil's Ford) and immediately did the wrongest thing that was possible. But he was willing, and no doubt did his best. Soon after we got in he went sick and we committed him to the care of the Compounder, who soon got him round. But we did not feel that we could face his food again. While he was ill, one Zaidu was announced who had come to pay his respects. Who was it but an old friend of Gilgit days who had been with us for four years as general underling! He had helped the cook and used often to cook for the nursery, so he was not without some elementary ideas. We offered to try him and he accepted with joy. His family could gladly manage the extra work at home, and hailed with pleasure the prospect of sharing his wages. We never thought of these jolly men as "servants" in any ordinary sense of the word. They were peasant proprietors in a tiny way, but though they had enough to eat and to wear, they were absolutely without cash, and were willing to do any honest work to get some. Zaidu looked much more flourishing and fitter than in Gilgit days. He was then rather young, and I suspect that the older servants put upon him a good deal, but now he had been living an independent life again and had got back his natural dignity and self-respect. His pleasure at the thought of working for us again was disarming. So we took him on, and though he was no chef he did us well. He was ingenious in devising new ways of cooking the half hen, and his scones were light and eatable, a pleasant change from Shafi's paper-weights. Moreover, he was willing to learn.

We were able to get white flour up from Gilgit for cakes 252
and biscuits, but we found that native bread-flaps made from the local stone-ground wholemeal wheat were more appetizing than white bread in any form. They are made without